
Memorandum

To: City of Woburn

From: MAPC

On: 6/26/2018

Re: New Boston Street Economic Development Study Memorandum

This memorandum outlines the existing conditions research and recommendations conducted for the New Boston Street commercial / industrial area of Woburn. The following mapping and analysis cover existing zoning, land use, building size and type, connectivity, property ownership, and relevant planning and development processes. Further, it includes high level findings from the New Boston Street business survey and business breakfast convened on February 9th 2018.

Executive Summary

The New Boston Street Industrial Park is a thriving business district supporting over 300 businesses and thousands of jobs. Its easy access to highways make it attractive for businesses serving a regional customer base and also provides an excellent employment base both from the Boston suburbs as well as smaller cities around the region. Reasonable rental rates, large building sizes, and available space all have contributed to the success of the business district.

While the regional location of New Boston Street has been a boon for business attraction, local access to the area has been a challenge due to its somewhat isolated nature on the western side of the Lowell Line commuter rail tracks. The opening of the New Boston Street Bridge will likely alleviate some pressure on Mishawum Road and improve overall traffic circulation. The City should continue to explore the feasibility of additional transportation options to access this important employment center via a pedestrian sky bridge and possible alternative transportation models such as private shuttles (e.g., as part of a larger Transportation Management Association's routes and/or from the Anderson/Woburn Regional Transit Center) or rerouted MBTA buses.

The existing zoning designation in the New Boston Industrial Park allows for large lot coverage, a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of .5 and minimal open space and buffer requirements. This relatively relaxed zoning has successfully encouraged the development community to take advantage of almost all available developable parcels in the district, with many buildings coming online in the past 20 years. Cummings Properties and MDG Realty are the two largest property owners in the area, each operating a number of multi-tenant office and industrial buildings. Cummings has successfully positioned several of its

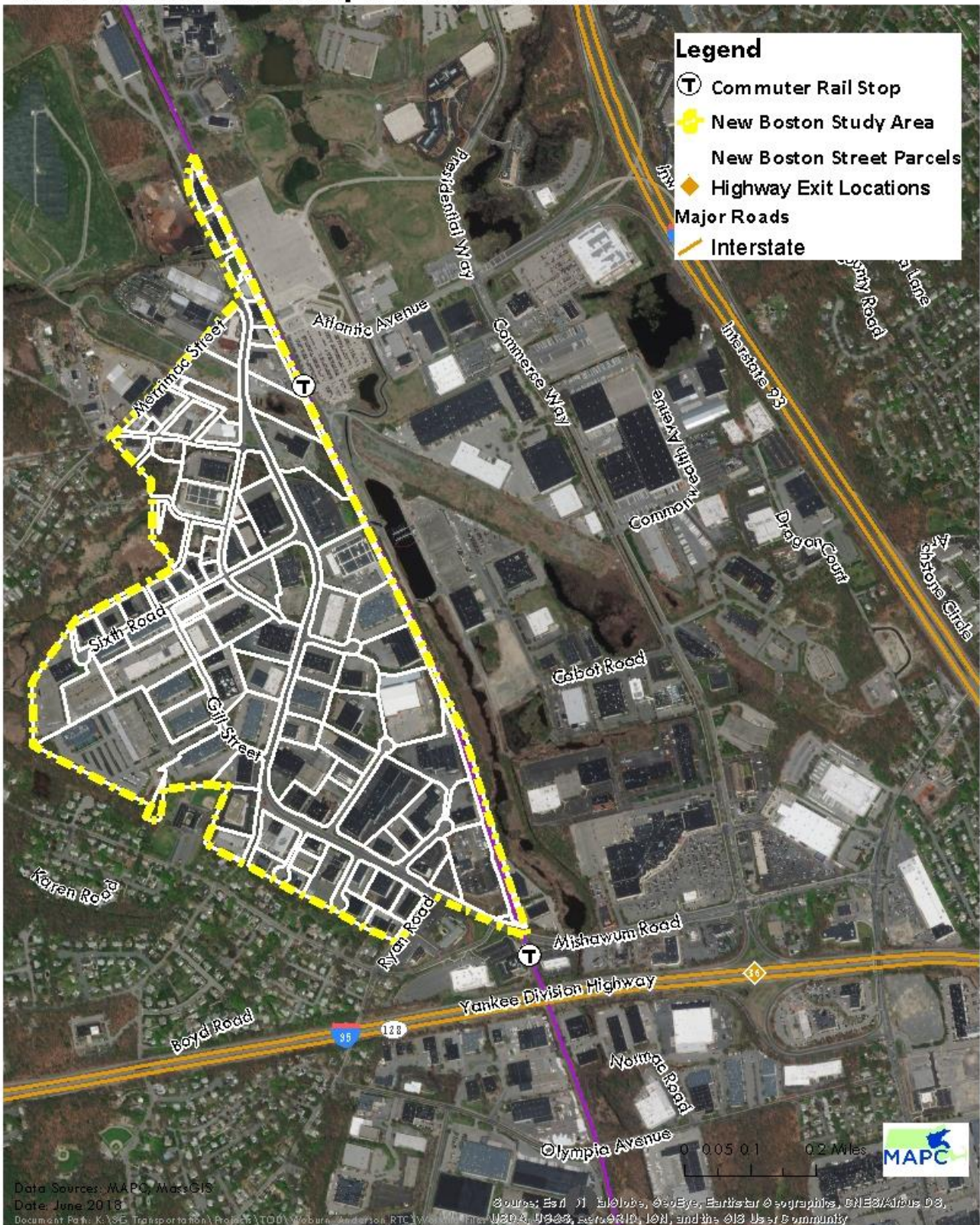
properties to attract bio tech type businesses in addition to the strong cluster of construction, wholesale trade, manufacturing and other more traditional industrial business types in the area.

Some of the businesses operating on New Boston Street cited the need for additional parking as a challenge point. The issue of parking on New Boston Street is particularly interesting as the area is very difficult to access by other mode of transportation, yet the massive amounts of space dedicated to parking are limiting the potential for building expansion. New Boston Street is unique among many industrial areas because of its proximity to a public transportation hub at the Anderson Woburn Regional Transportation Center, as well as Mishawum Station. Although Mishawum Station operates under a very limited schedule currently, there is the potential that more regular service could be resumed.¹

By retaining the New Boston Street district as a job-dense industrial area, the City of Woburn is well positioned to continue supporting the approximately 370 businesses employing well over 5,000 residents of the Boston metro area, including a significant number of Woburn locals, as well as attracting new businesses to the area.

¹ The MBTA and a developer came to an agreement to provide additional service to Mishawum Station if an approximately 200 unit residential building was constructed. Although that development did not occur there is current planning taking place for a 400 unit building in close proximity to Mishawum Station. To date, the developers of this development have not had conversations with the MBTA. There is, however, a precedent from the previous agreement that could set the stage for adding service to Mishawum Station.

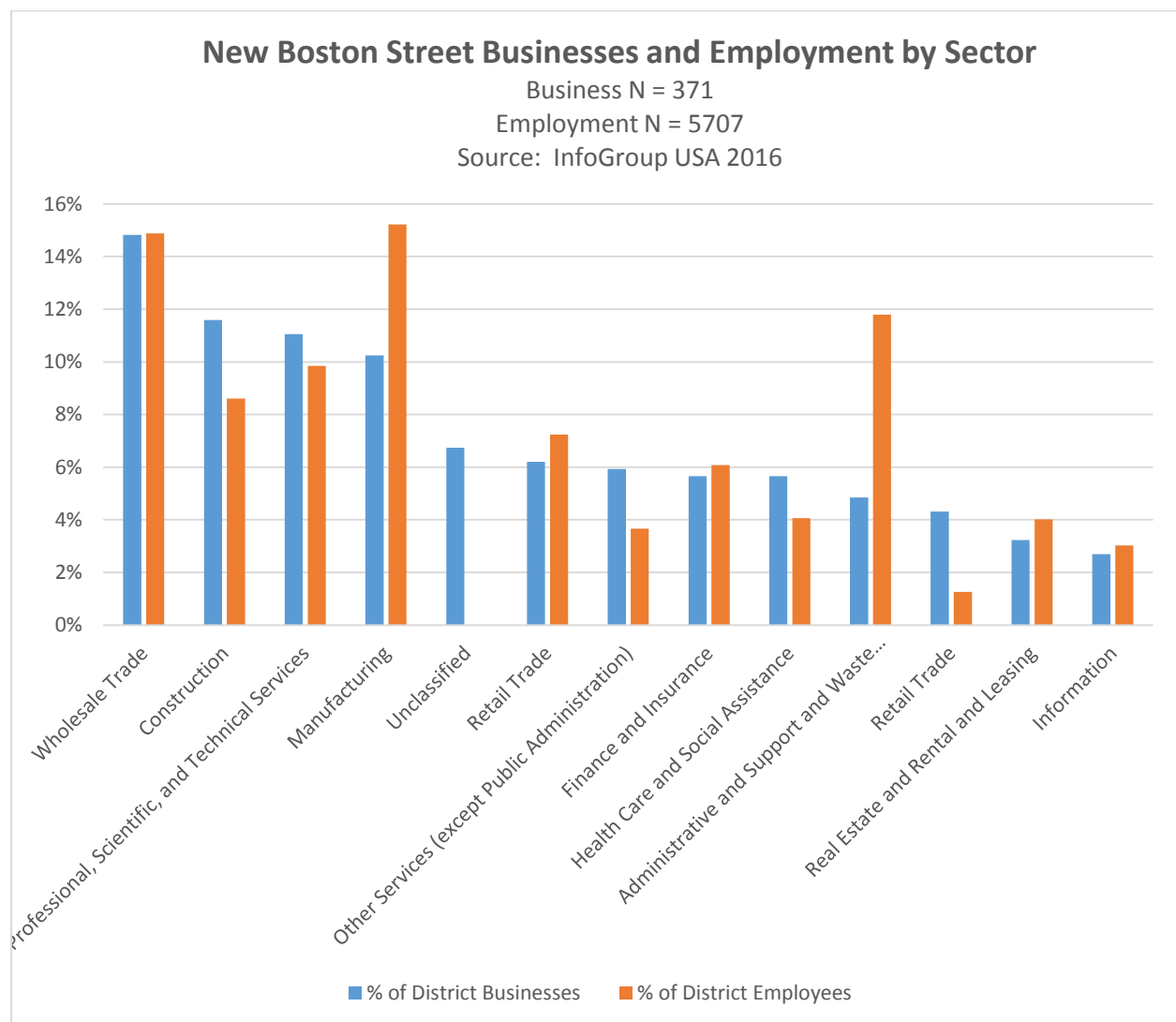
New Boston Street Study Area and Context



Firms and Employment

The New Boston Street industrial district is strategically located at the intersection of I-95 and I-93, making it a desirable location for businesses who rely on regional logistics for business operations. The clustering of wholesale and construction firms in the area illustrate this locational advantage as both business types typically serve a regional clientele.

Employment density in the area is unsurprisingly concentrated in the industrial type sectors that exhibit the largest numbers of firms. The exception is the Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services sector (NAICS Code 56), which displays an outsized level of employment as compared to the number of firms operating in the New Boston Street Area. This is likely due to the presence of a few large employers in the waste management field such as Boston Cleaning Co Inc., located on New Boston Street. The manufacturing sector also exhibits significant job density as compared to the relative number of firms operating in the area.



Some businesses that have been attracted to the New Boston Street industrial area may have once been located in the urban inner core area of Boston and were pushed north due to rising rents. Similarly, there may be businesses (particularly in the tech and bio tech fields) who may have begun operations in the Boston / Cambridge market and expanded their operations to the point where space became a constraint and they moved to the area seeking larger square footage real estate.

A series of anecdotal responses from a business survey that MAPC recently conducted in an industrial corridor of Medford indicated that businesses in the inner core area of Boston view Woburn as a viable option for business relocation should they have to move. As the market for industrial real estate continues to tighten in the inner core of Boston, Woburn is well positioned to absorb businesses needing to relocate as long as it can maintain a reservoir of industrial real estate.

Access

While the New Boston Street industrial district occupies a regionally significant location, it does have some local access issues. Currently, the primary access point to the district from the highways is via Mishawum Road which connects to Commerce Way. There is also a connection between School St and Mishawum Road via Ryan St that has been cited as an alternative route into the district. This alternative route moves heavy trucks through a residential neighborhood and has been a source of conflict between residents and some of the industrial businesses in the area.

To address some of these access issues, the City of Woburn has been working toward restoring the New Boston Street Bridge, which once provided a connection point to Commerce Way north of the Anderson/Woburn Regional Transit Center (Anderson/Woburn Station) before being demolished following a fire in 1977. A northern connection point to Commerce Way will likely reduce some of the traffic flow being forced through Mishawum Rd, particularly from vehicles accessing the area from the north via I - 93.

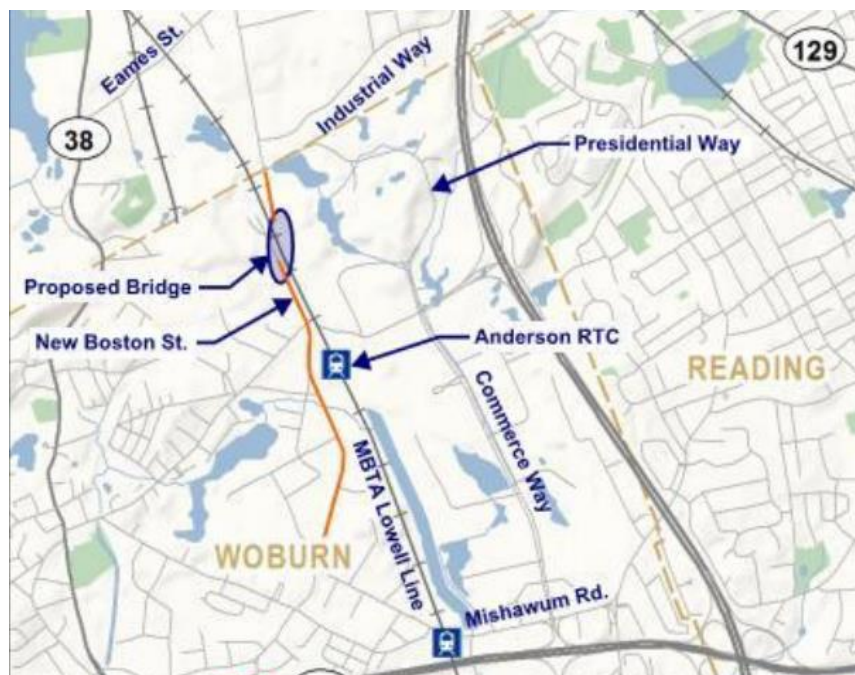
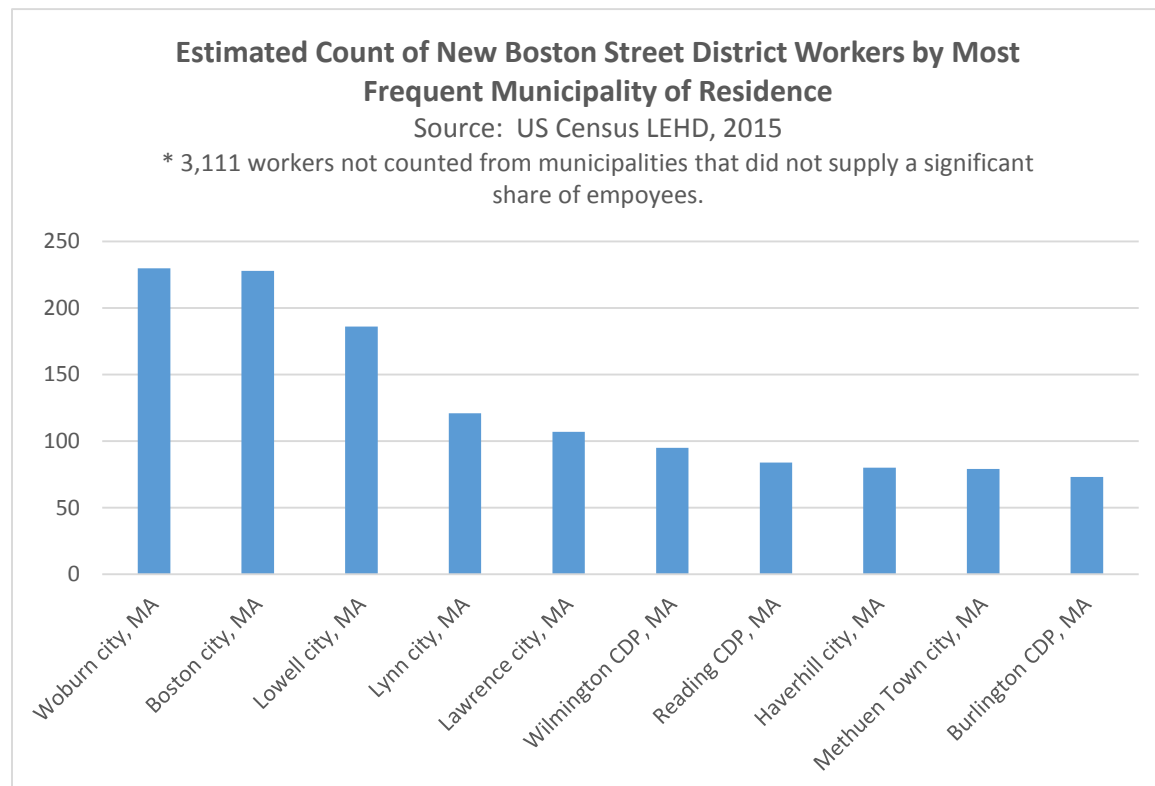


Image Source: MassDOT Presentation, Feb 1 2017

While the new New Boston Street Bridge will provide easier access for vehicles driving into the New Boston Street industrial district from the north, it will not provide a direct connection for pedestrians from Anderson/Woburn Station itself.

In addition to the need for a new New Boston Street Bridge, the City has also identified a need to better connect the Anderson/Woburn Station to the industrial area. Aside from Woburn, residents from

Lowell, and Boston make up the greatest share of employees in the New Boston Street district². Commuters from these areas could feasibly access Anderson/Woburn Station via public transit, and then the New Boston Street area if there was a direct pedestrian connection.³ By making multi-modal connections to the area, the City of Woburn may be able to further reduce the amount of vehicle circulation moving through this area which would reduce traffic strain on residents as well as improve the environment through the reduction of vehicle miles traveled by employees.



Zoning, Building Size, and Lot Size

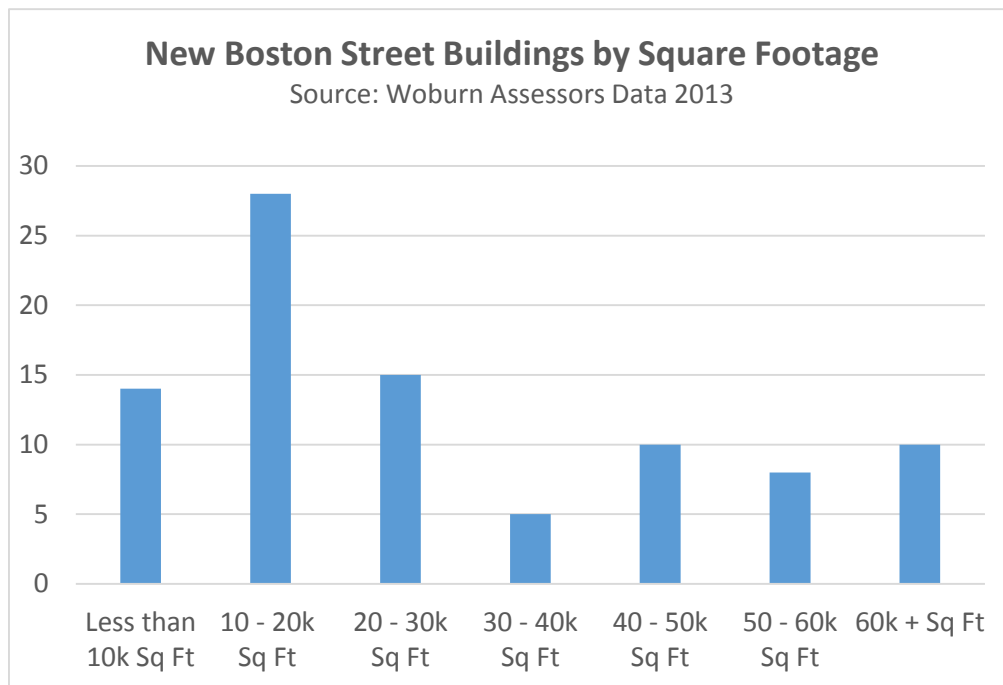
The New Boston St industrial district is composed of 105 individual parcels that cover approximately 253 acres of land. The area is currently zoned as IP (Industrial Park) and is distinct from the IP zoning on the east side of the commuter rail tracks in that it is not part of the Commerce Way Corridor Overlay District, which allows for residential and a variety of other uses through Special Permit. The uses allowed by right in the IP zone are quite broad and consist of the types of businesses that are compatible with each other within a light industrial area. The IP zone differs from the IP2 zone in that it does not allow some of the heavier hazardous industrial uses or adult uses that can locate in the IP2 zones. The IP zone does not allow residential development. The current allowable FAR in the IP zone is set at 0.5 with a height limitation of 7 stories or 80 feet. The current zoning sets a minimum lot size for

² US Census LEHD, 2015

³ Current designs for the New Boston Street Bridge contain pedestrian facilities; however, a sky-bridge would provide a far more direct connection for the majority of pedestrians working in the New Boston Street industrial area.

development at 40,000 sq ft with 25 foot front, rear, and side yard setbacks along with a 30% open space requirement.

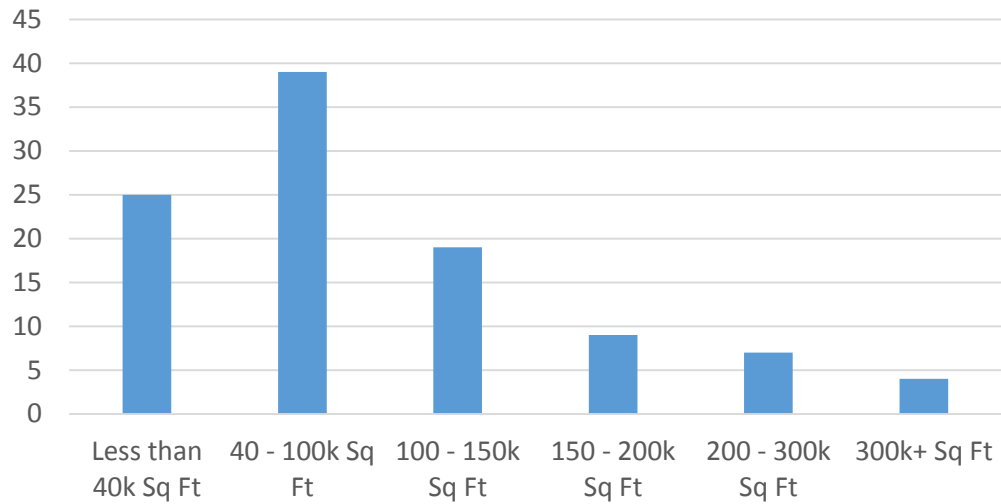
The majority of buildings in the New Boston Street area are between 10,000 and 30,000 sq ft in size and are single story. These large buildings often accommodate multiple businesses. There are only a few multi story buildings in the district which is unsurprising given that nearly 70% of the land in the district is in warehouse or light industrial use. The businesses that operate in the District are mostly ground floor type users (i.e., firms that use warehouse / light industrial space such as wholesalers, distributors, or manufacturers) which may be an indication of why there hasn't been more multi story development in the area.



New Boston Street Parcels by Lot Size

Source: Woburn Assessors Office, 2013

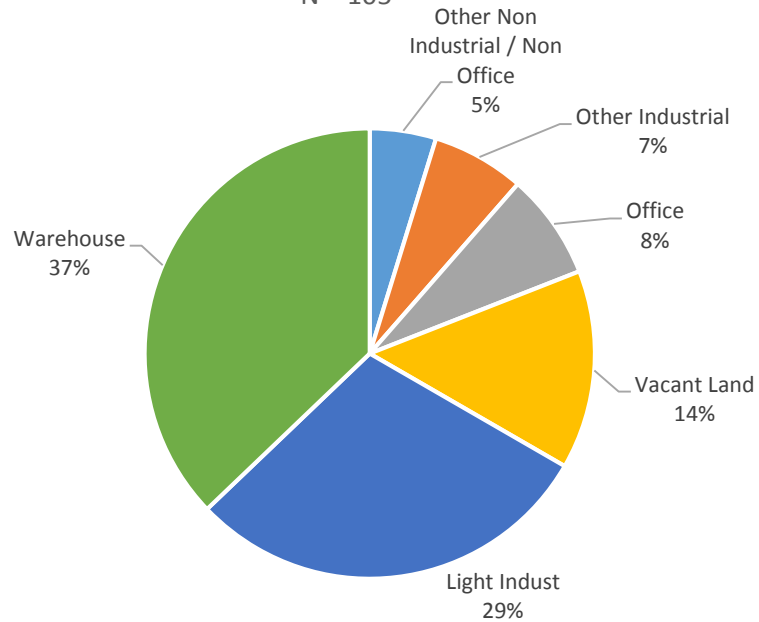
N = 109



New Boston Street Area Land Use by Type

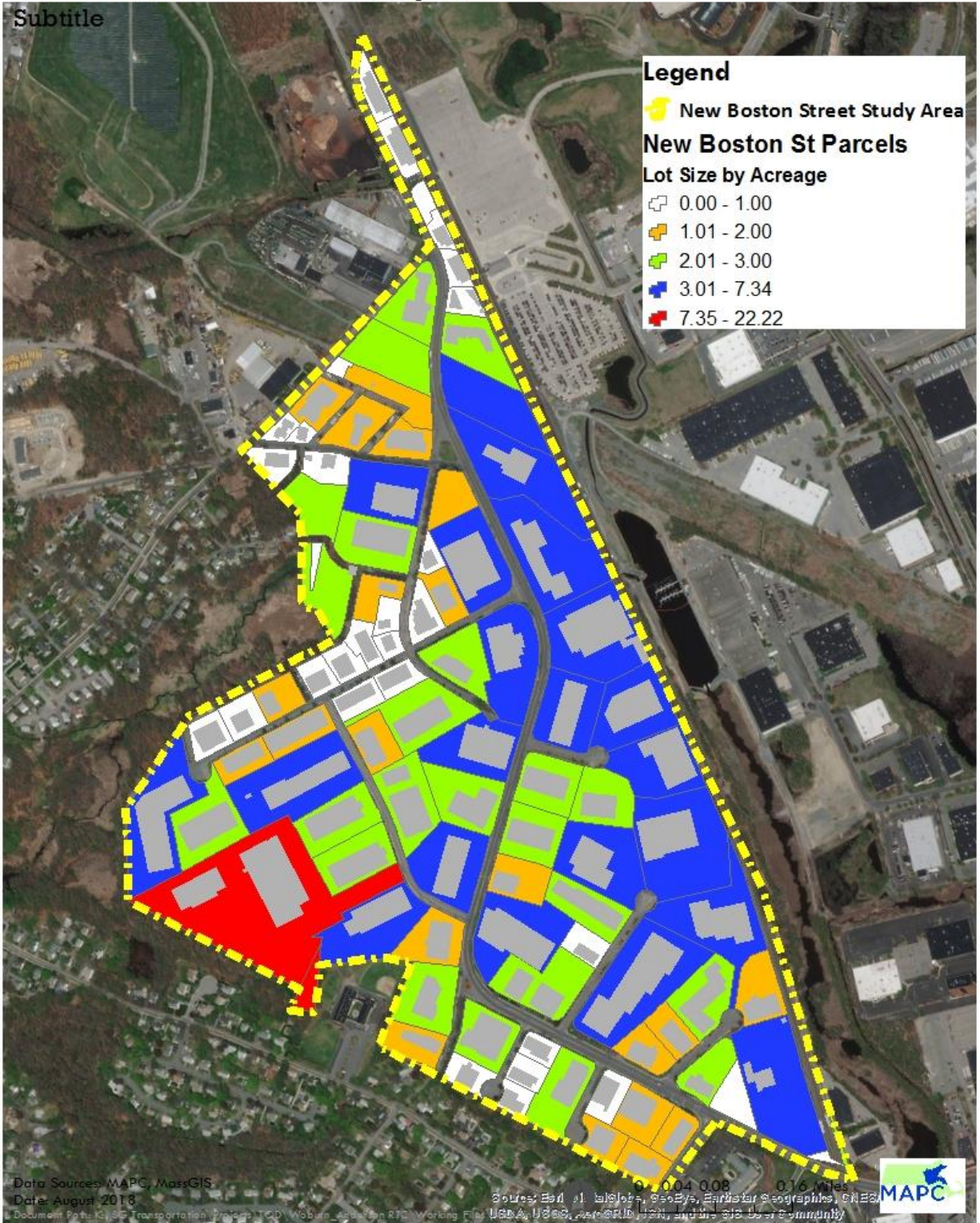
Source: Woburn Assessors Office, 2013

N = 105

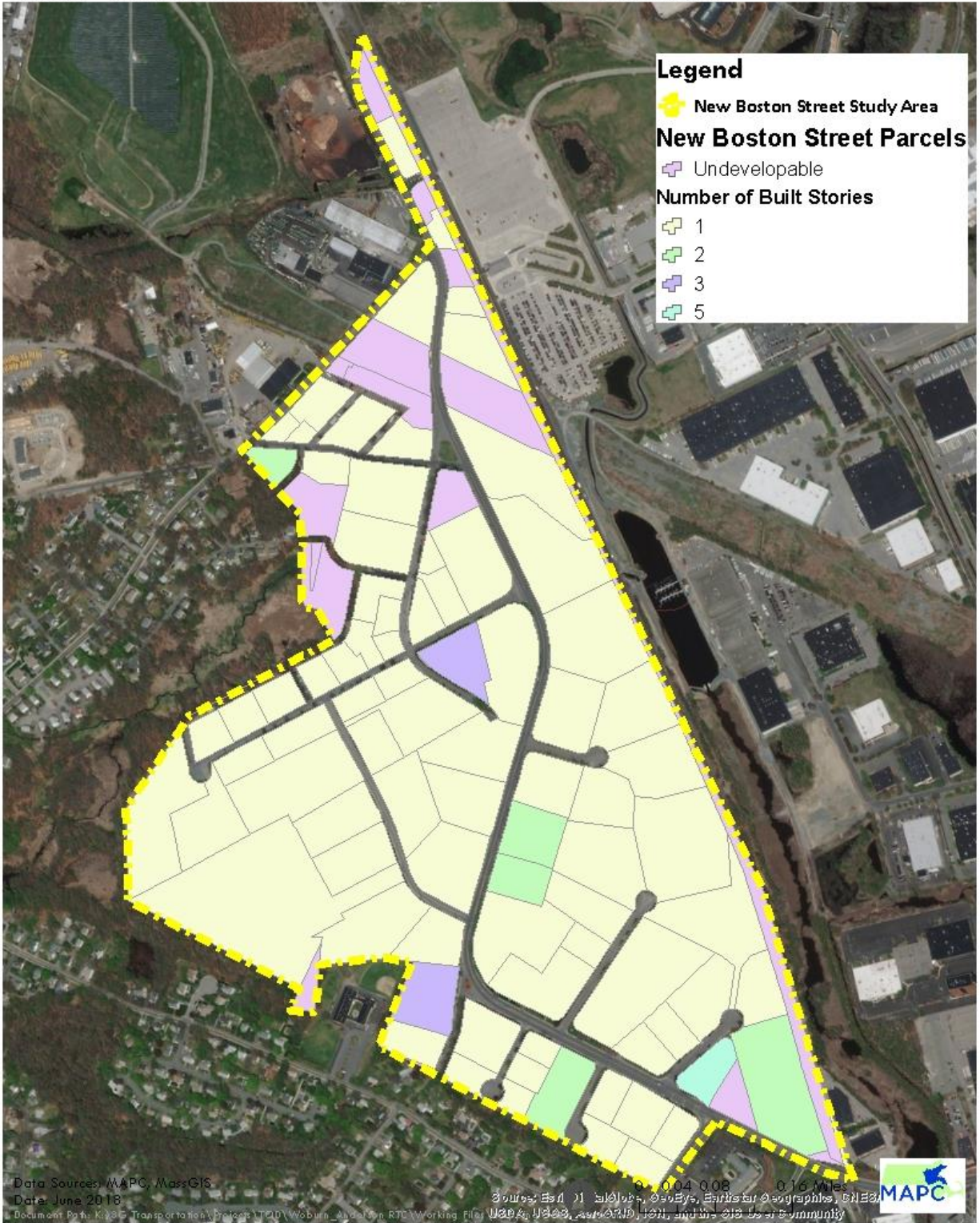


New Boston Street Parcels by Size

Subtitle



New Boston Street Buildings by Number of Stories



Parking

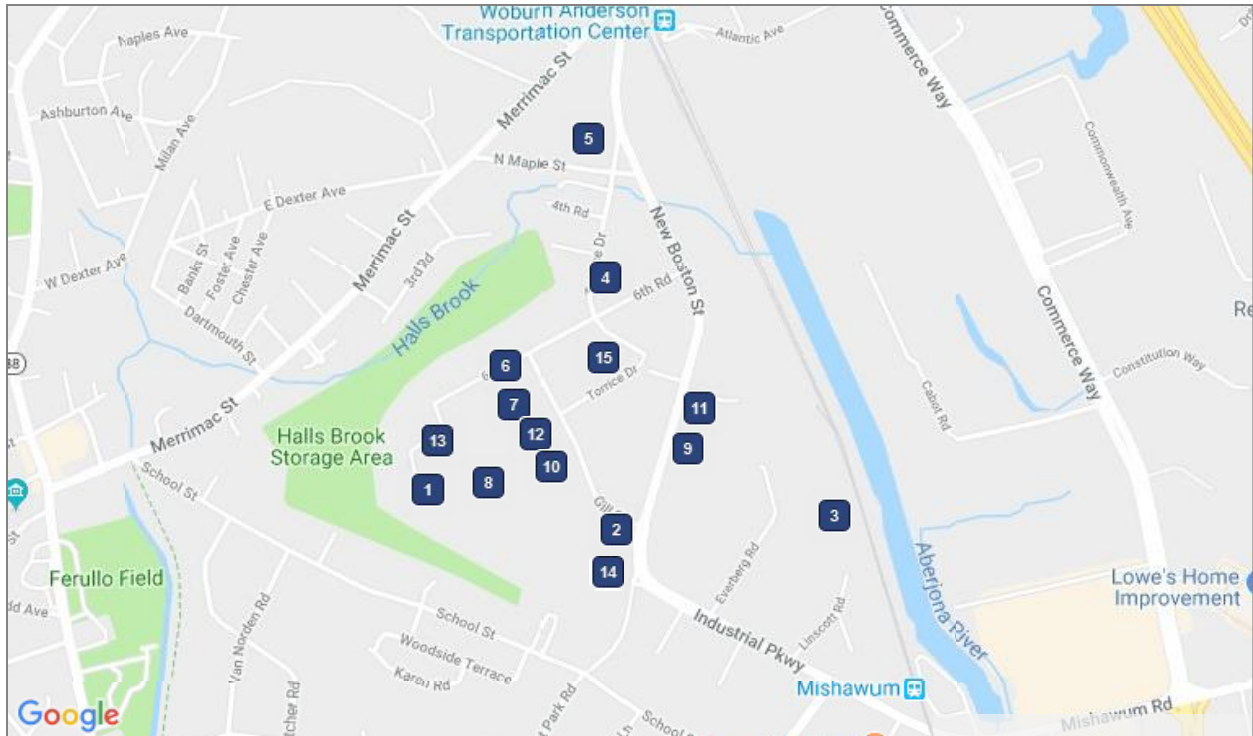
The parking requirements in Woburn are use-based and not related to zoning districts. The two primary use types in the New Boston St IP district are warehousing / manufacturing and office uses. Office uses are required to provide one parking space per 350 sq ft of built space. Manufacturing uses are required to provide one parking space per 400 sq ft of built space *or* one for every 3 employees on the largest shift. Warehousing uses are required to provide one parking space per 800 sq ft of built space.

The New Boston Street business survey did reveal that, of the businesses who responded, the majority of employees drive to work despite the proximity to a commuter rail station. This was later confirmed at the New Boston Street business breakfast hosted on February 9th 2018. There are currently no vacant, developable parcels in the New Boston St industrial park, and as such any new construction would need to either be vertical or expand into existing parking area(s). Many of the current users in the area are single story dependent and therefore may be unable to benefit from additional building height, but could possibly use additional horizontal space. The City may want to consider providing some relief from parking requirements by encouraging businesses to provide shuttles from the Anderson / Woburn commuter rail station, providing space for Zipcar parking, or other methods of reducing parking needs. Reducing the needed parking in the New Boston Street area may open up building development and expansion opportunities that are currently unavailable.

Property Ownership

The majority of property owners in the New Boston Street area are owned by business occupants or an assortment of individual real estate operators. Cummings Properties owns 13 buildings in the New Boston Street area, some of which are large multi-tenant type properties. MDG Realty owns 7 buildings. These two entities are the only landlords with more than two buildings in their New Boston Street area portfolio. The majority of the property owners in the area only own one parcel, which may indicate a large number of business owner occupants.

A review of Loopnet indicated a number of properties of various types of lease options in the New Boston St area. Prices ranged from around \$10 / Sq Ft / Year to \$16 / Sq Ft /Year. The availability of a manageable amount real estate for lease in this area is encouraging as it signals the availability for additional businesses to grow in Woburn without indicating a market downturn in terms of location desirability. As displayed in the leasing map below, the majority of leasing properties are located off of 6th Road and Gill Street. This is where a number of multi-tenant Cummings-owned properties are located.



| | Property Address | Property Type | Property Sub-type | Rental Rate | Space Count |
|----|-------------------|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| 1 | 12 Gill St | Office | | Rent Not Disclosed | 1 |
| 2 | 134 New Boston St | Industrial | Warehouse | \$12.00 /SF/Yr | 1 |
| 3 | 17 Everberg Rd | Flex | Light Manufacturing | \$14.00 /SF/Yr | 1 |
| 4 | 11 6th Rd | Industrial | Manufacturing | \$14.00 /SF/Yr | 1 |
| 5 | 192 New Boston St | Industrial | Warehouse | \$14.00 /SF/Yr | 1 |
| 6 | 28-32 Sixth Rd | Industrial | Warehouse | Rent Not Disclosed | 1 |
| 7 | 2 Gill St | Flex | R&D | Rent Not Disclosed | 1 |
| 8 | 10 Gill St | Flex | R&D | Rent Not Disclosed | 1 |
| 9 | 155 New Boston St | Flex | | Rent Not Disclosed | 3 |
| 10 | 6 Gill St | Flex | Light Manufacturing | Rent Not Disclosed | 2 |
| 11 | 165 New Boston St | Flex | Light Manufacturing | Rent Not Disclosed | 3 |
| 12 | 4 Gill St | Industrial | Manufacturing | Rent Not Disclosed | 1 |
| 13 | 55 6th Rd | Flex | Light Manufacturing | \$12.00 /SF/Yr | 1 |
| 14 | 130 New Boston St | Office | | \$16.95 /SF/Yr | 1 |

| | Property Address | Property Type | Property Sub-type | Rental Rate | Space Count |
|----|-------------------|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| 15 | 3 Gill St | Flex | Light Manufacturing | Rent Not Disclosed | 3 |
| 16 | 130 New Boston St | Office | | Rent Not Disclosed | 2 |

Business Survey

In early 2018 the City of Woburn conducted a survey of the businesses currently operating in the New Boston Street area. The business survey was part of a larger effort by the City of Woburn to connect with the New Boston Street business community. The City also hosted a business stakeholder meeting in early February as an opportunity to open a conversation about business conditions in the District and discuss the forthcoming New Boston Street Bridge construction project.

As there were only 10 complete responses to the business survey a full analysis of the survey is not warranted. However, the survey is useful in beginning to understand some of the perspectives that business operators have in the area, as outlined in the key findings listed below. The conversation from the stakeholder meeting yielded additional insights. See appendix for complete survey responses.

Business Outreach Key Findings

- Traffic bottlenecking was cited as an issue by multiple respondents to the business survey and again at the February business forum.
- Similarly, parking capacity was cited as an issue by one business in the survey and was brought up by several others during the February forum.
- Respondents cited employees residing in a number of surrounding communities in the north suburban and western municipalities of Woburn. All businesses cited employees from Lowell and Woburn, which is in alignment with the LEHD Data findings.
- Respondents said that almost all employees currently drive to work. Responses were quite varied regarding the idea of running shuttles from Anderson/Woburn Station. There appeared to be interest from some operators while others cited the need for more information and others did not see the service as being valuable. None of the operators saw value in running shuttles from Alewife Station on the Red Line.

Recommendations and Next Steps

The New Boston Street business owners are generally happy with their location and several expressed appreciation that the City has proactively engaged them to further improve the area. The following are several recommendations coming out of this process that the City may consider, most of which focus on improving connectivity to the area:

- Allow eating establishments as an accessory use in the IP district. Several business owners cited a desire for eating establishments to improve the area's attractiveness to employees, who increasingly consider lunch dining options to be an employment amenity.
- Assess parking utilization to determine whether changes to parking requirements for certain uses are warranted. A brief survey of parking lots during business hours can provide a sense for whether

parking requirements can be relaxed for certain uses, whether improved parking management strategies are warranted or, conversely, whether more parking should be required.

- Continue exploring the feasibility and funding options for a pedestrian sky bridge from Anderson/Woburn Station to the New Boston Street area. Although the New Boston Street bridge will improve pedestrian access, it is likely still too far for people to feasibly walk from the Station to their place of employment. A pedestrian bridge would improve access both to the New Boston Street area and to residential areas in North Woburn.
- Continue exploring “first/last mile” connection opportunities through shuttle services as part of a larger TMA and/or rerouting certain MBTA bus lines.